

HELP WANTED!

Wisconsin's Ambulance Services are calling 9-1-1 requesting help with a statewide crisis

Wisconsin's Emergency Medical Services have long been piecing things together and relying heavily on volunteers. A new survey by the Office of Rural Health confirms that the system risks collapse:

- 41% of EMS services in Wisconsin are staffed by 6 or fewer people, with **21% of services being run by 2-3 STAFF MEMBERS**. The loss of a single member can cause the ambulance service to close their doors. If they close, their calls must be absorbed by nearby services, already struggling to keep their doors open.
- 29% of the EMS services do not have adequate funding to operate through 2023. That's **one-third of Wisconsin services that will run out of money this year**.

Headlines across Wisconsin report on ambulance services unable to respond to 9-1-1 calls, closures of long-time EMS services, and municipalities struggling to secure reliable ambulance service.

According to the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health's survey, in the past 12 months:

- 41% of ambulance services reported that they had open periods in their schedules where they were unavailable to respond to a single 9-1-1 call. They relied on neighboring services to ensure that citizens received ambulance service.
- But there's a cost to this reliance - 78% reported running a call for a neighboring service due to low staffing, which places their ambulance(s) out of reach for their own communities.
- In the worst-case scenario, Wisconsin citizens in at least 10 communities **placed a 9-1-1 call in which an ambulance never arrived** —because there was not a staffed ambulance to send.

Without significant intervention, reliability of the system will continue to rapidly decline:

- 33% of services that staff multiple ambulances report that they placed some of their ambulances out of service due to lack of staffing.

"We are a very dedicated team, but we are to the point where we are getting burned out. No time off and very little pay. Finding it hard to find good help at the wages that we pay and no benefits. This is a profession not a hobby."

-Service Director, Northwest Region

Several EMS and Fire Services have formed a coalition to bring these critical facts to the legislature and present a plan for solutions. Please contact your representative to support these efforts.

The full report will be available in February 2023. Inquiries can be directed to: James Small, Rural EMS Outreach Program Manager, WI Office of Rural Health. 608-265-8221 or small5@wisc.edu.



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